1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

614 554 Uru *warugu* should carry game and honey for the men of Morane and Unapane.

291 184 Some of the village Veddas of those days had cloth, and when dancing to the *yaku* they wore the long cloth garment called *hangalla*; the wilder Veddas had no cloth and wore leaves, but it was not clear whether they had not also a certain amount of bark cloth which was their ordinary covering, and leaves may have been worn in addition when they invoked the *yaku*[1].

685 609 778 826 The old man knew of the custom of a man keeping a piece of human liver in his betel pouch; it was universal and in his young days every Vedda desired to have a piece. Strangers, even Veddas, who intruded on the hunting grounds would be killed and their liver taken, no other part of the dead man being used, and the custom gave rise neither to warfare nor to vendettas[2].

764 768 Caves in which a death occurred were deserted, the corpse being covered with leaves; perhaps men very near dissolution were left before death had actually occurred, but this did not seem certain. Bones found in the cave when the group returned to it after an interval of some ten or twelve years were thrown away quite carelessly. The spirits of the dead became the Nae Yaku who, with Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka, gave game and prosperity. The *kirikoraha* ceremony was performed for the Nae Yaku, and *adukku* (cooked food), which even in the old days consisted of coconut and rice, was offered to them. The wilder Veddas gave nothing to the Buddhist priests and made no offerings at shrines, nor did they know the Kataragam God, Kanda Swami, though the village Veddas worshipped him and knew that Walliame had been taken to wife by him, and honey was presented to the goddess at certain shrines, especially one at Kokote Sila, frequented by the village Veddas.

775 769 771 184

535 751 A few of the village Veddas would dance for the Sinhalese in order to protect their cattle, bring prosperity to their villages, and secure them from epidemics; they would dance *kolamaduwa* which the old man pointed out was derived from a

[1] Cf. p. 213.
[2] For details of this custom see Chapter VIII.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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instead of *kodai*, *tiru* being a Tamil word, so that a composite word meaning "really nothing" is now used.

At the present day there are probably no more than a dozen families left as representatives of the Kovil Vanamai Veddas and all of these live on Sinhalese chenas and are in dire poverty. The country has been referred to already as unhealthy, monkeys although abundant are not easily approached especially in the dry season, and other game is scarce. Isolated families have settled down in Sinhalese villages to pick up whatever living they can as occasional hired labourers, and some of these people were seen in a wretchedly starved condition. The most prosperous are three families living on the large Sinhalese chena (Plate XII, figure 1) at Bandaraduwa near Devulani tank. But even with the assistance of the chena these people are not well off, and it appeared that they were no strangers to hunger. Owing to their position on the border of the Sinhalese and Tamil country, they had been influenced by both Hinduism and Buddhism to a certain extent. In spite of this they knew numerous Vedda songs and incantations, and the ceremonies following a death which occurred in the vicinity during our visit clearly demonstrated that foreign ideas formed but a thin stratum overlying their own beliefs.

The Uniche Veddas were not seen in their own country but some men were brought to us by the Forest Ranger, Mr S. Perera, at Maha Oya, where the photograph shown in Plate XII was taken. We have no note that these Veddas were Uru *warige* men, but it seems probable that they represented the Uru *warige* community recorded (as mentioned by the Vedda Arachi) on the last page. They had retained their own customs and beliefs very largely and appeared to be living in a condition very similar to the people near Devulani, though perhaps they were better fed.

Sitala Wanniya. After visiting so many decaying or degenerate communities a refreshing state of affairs was found at Sitala Wanniya. Here there were at least four families who were living the life their forefathers had lived for generations without perceptible change. They still found game, honey and yams in quantities sufficient not only to support life, but to leave

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

CHAPTER VII

RELIGION (CONTINUED)

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WE have now described the fundamental ideas of the Vedda cult of the dead, but superposed upon these there are two other strata of belief both of which have influenced the religion of certain groups of Veddas to a greater or less extent. Before discussing these we may briefly indicate the views of the more thorough of previous investigators. In this as in other matters Knox was better informed than many of his successors when he said of the Veddas, "The *tamer* do build Temples, the wild only bring their sacrifice under Trees, and while it is offering dance round it, both men and women[1]." Tennant's account adds little to this; Bailey's account, undoubtedly the most complete and trustworthy that has been given to date, is not quoted here because it will be found almost in full on pp. 160 and 161 where the religious beliefs of the Nilgala Veddas are discussed. Tennant writes, "They have no knowledge of a God, nor of a future state...in short, no instinct of worship, except...when sick, they send for devil dancers to drive away the evil spirit, who is believed to inflict the disease. The dance is executed in front of an offering of something eatable, placed on a tripod of sticks, the dancer having his head and girdle decorated with green leaves. At first he shuffles with his feet to a plaintive air, and by degrees he works himself into a state of great excitement and action, accompanied by moans and screams, and during this paroxysm, he professes to be inspired with instruction for the cure of the patient[2]."

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[1] *Op. cit.* p. 63.
[2] Tennant, *op. cit.* pp. 441 and 442.

[p. 146]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

had never thought the matter over. Nevertheless they honour the names which like the Sinhalese they call Yakas with food, dances or offerings. Any monotheistic idea of God is absent both in 'Nature' and in 'Culture' Veddas[1]."

The three strata of belief to which we referred at the beginning of this chapter and which exist among the Veddas of the present day, have not fused so thoroughly that there is any great difficulty in isolating them. We believe they may be tabulated as follows:

I. The Cult of the dead, including the cult of the spirits of recent ancestors, i.e. of the Nae Yaku and the *yaku* of certain Veddas who have been long dead and may well be regarded as heroes. The most important of these is Kande Yaka.

II. The Cult of foreign spirits, who have become naturalised and have taken the friendly protective nature of the Vedda *yaku*.

III. The Cult of foreign spirits who, though not often regarded as such, have retained their foreign nature and are in the main terrible or even hostile.

Another feature of the last stratum of thought is the endowment of true Vedda *yaku* with foreign attributes[2]. When the history of the island is considered, it is not surprising that the first condition, which may be considered the primitive religion of the Veddas, should nowhere be found standing alone at the present day. It is impossible to say how much the Indian invaders influenced the aboriginal inhabitants of Lanka (Ceylon) when they took possession of the island under Vijeyo about 500 B.C., for the few references made to Veddas in the ancient chronicles of the country throw no light on this subject.

Knox mentions that Veddas paid a tribute of game and honey to the Sinhalese, and in his day there were "wild and tame" Veddas, and it is certain that from the middle ages onwards there was a considerable amount of intercourse between at least the tamer Veddas and the Sinhalese. Therefore it is natural that foreign beliefs should have gradually infiltrated the native Vedda cult.

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] The invocation (No. xiii) to Ambiyapot Kirisumi given on p. 316 is an excellent example of this. Bilindi Yaka is here treated as if he were a Sinhalese or Tamil deity.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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62 77 To illustrate and prove these propositions we must examine in detail the beliefs of some of the communities in which each stage is respectively dominant. The Veddas met at Godatalawa and Sitala Wanniya form the best example of the first stage of belief. In comparing their beliefs it must, however, be remembered that the Godatalawa family have drifted away from their hunting grounds and are in dire want, and that their oldest man and leader (now quite infirm though still mentally vigorous) was never a shaman and consequently could give only the lay opinion of his group on religious matters. It must then not be assumed that no spirits beyond the *Nae Yaku*, Kande Yaka, and Bilindi Yaka were known to the shaman of the Galmeda community, although the fact that the laymen only knew of these spirits shows how vastly more important they were than any other.

The Sitala Wanniya people, on the other hand, were living in a condition which must have been general from ancient times up to about 70 years ago. Four of the five families had never made even rough chena or built bark houses, but lived on game, honey and yams and wandered about from rock-shelter to rock-shelter within their territory.

776 782 At Godatalawa Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka were both known though they were not recognised as brothers, and Kande Yaka was said to be greater than all other *yaku*. They are the two principal *yaku* invoked in order to obtain game, but with them there are invoked three other *yaku*, who, it was stated, are not the spirits of the dead but have existed as *yaku* from the beginning. These were, however, of little importance, and our informant, an old man the senior of the group but not a shaman, did not remember their names. Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka would be invoked in order to obtain game at the [224] *kirikoraha* ceremony, or simply when dancing round an arrow struck in the ground. These dances were not in gratitude for game already killed, but when the hunting had been successful, pieces of flesh from the neck and chest of the kill were cooked on the ashes and Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka were invoked to come to this offering which a few minutes later would be consumed by the Veddas. If part of the meat were not thus

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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The names of certain spirits residing on various hills and rocks were known; they were said not to be worshipped, although they were looked upon with awe and respect as they were believed to cause sickness.

These spirits are the Maha Yakini who are especially associated with the hills Nuwaragala, Walimbagala and a rock called Kalumal Ela. The chief of the Maha Yakini is the Maha Kiriamma, and the other Maha Yakini are her attendants. Although associated with rocks and hill-tops they are not invoked before taking honey in these places. It was stated that the Maha Yakini were formerly living people—old women—and that they were especially fond of children and might even steal them. It is for this reason that infants are protected by an arrow struck in the ground, and it is clear that something of their character as old Vedda women still survives in spite of their generally more or less unfriendly attributes.

Concerning the Maha Kiriamma nothing definite could be learnt: our informant had heard it said that she had been invoked in the old days, but knew nothing of this himself. Handuna said that what little knowledge they had of the Maha Kiriamma had travelled to them from the Bintenne Veddas near Horaborawewa[1].

In the Sitala Wanniya community, therefore, the second stratum is well developed and the third is indicated. The second and third strata, though probably not recently introduced, are, however, entirely subsidiary to the primitive cult of the friendly dead.

The Bandaraduwa community is one in which the second stratum is so highly developed that at first sight it appears dominant, for after a death offerings are made to the Buddhist priest, but this is only done as an additional means of propitiation of the *Nae Yaku* who are still considered of the first importance, to whom an offering is made on the seventh day after death. Further, Kande Yaka is still closely associated with the *Nae Yaku* and is invoked with them, but he is no longer formally regarded as the Lord of the Dead, that function has been usurped by Kanda Swami or Skanda known to these Veddas as "the Kataragam

[1] An invocation to the Maha Kiriamma (No. XXXIII), a fragment of a much longer formula (No. XXXIX), unknown to our informants, is given in Chapter X.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

God." He is one of the four gods who protect Ceylon, said to have come from India, and is worshipped chiefly by Tamils, who coming from the north-east frequently pass through the territory of the Kovil Vanamai Veddas on their pilgrimage to the temple of their God in the south of the island.

The following information concerning Kataragam is taken from Mr Herbert White's *Manual of Uva.*

Although the present temple is of brick and of no architectural pretensions it is the lineal descendant of the temple endowed some 2000 years ago by Dutugamunu, King of Mogana, as a thank-offering for assistance in overcoming the Tamil King Elala[1]. But Kataragam was a holy place before this, for the Mahavansa describes how the princes of Kataragam assisted at the planting of the shoots of the sacred Bo tree and how one of the miraculously produced offshoots was planted at Kataragam itself[2].

"The aspect and natural features of the country surrounding the temple of Kataragama are not calculated to make a favourable impression upon the eye when they first meet it. There is nothing in them to attract and invite it. Everything, with the exception of the temple and the river on which it stands, at the village of Kataragama and its vicinity looks wild, dreary and monotonous....

"The population of the village may be estimated at forty, including women and children; but it is liable to fluctuation at different periods of the year, from the influx and efflux of the pilgrims who resort to the temple. And I need scarcely add that the village, its adjacent hills, and the surrounding country, are all temple lands, and their occupants are attached to the temple service as its tenants[3]."

The guardian of the temple and its lands, the latter including a domain of some 60,000 acres, is a Buddhist headman resident at Badulla, and although there are now no Veddas near Kataragam, tradition states that there were formerly many Veddas in

[1] Kataragam is situated at the south-east of the island, on the left bank of the Manik-ganga, at a distance of more than forty miles north-east of Hambantota and about sixty miles south-east of Badulla.

[2] Mahavansa, Chapter XIX.

[3] *Manual of Uva*, p. 47.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

total amounting to 2 Rs. 97 cents. The offering made to the *Nae Yaku* cost only 40 cents and consisted of a coconut, 50 betel leaves and a measure of rice.

The actual ceremony at which the spirit of the dead man was invoked and offerings made to it is described in Chapter IX, pp. 233 to 237.

Certain of the invocations used by the Kovil Vanamai Veddas, for instance, in invocation (No. XXXIV) to Indigollae Kiriamma for success in hunting and the invocations sung at the *kolamaduwa* ceremony, especially that to Unapane Kiriamma (No. XXXVIII), show how greatly foreign influence has altered the character of spiritual beings who existed in the original Vedda religion.

The Veddas of Uniche form a community in much the same stage of belief as the Veddas of Bandaraduwa. A few days after death the spirit of the deceased obtains permission from a "chief" to accept offerings and assist or harm the living. Our informants could not tell us who this chief was, but appeared to think that he had lived in comparatively recent times, and were confident that he was not Kande or Bilindi Yaka.

The *Nae Yaku*, including the spirit of the dead man, are invoked a few, perhaps five, days after a death has taken place. A pot of coconut milk with betel leaves in it is placed upon a rice pounder, and the shaman, holding a ceremonial arrow in each hand, dances round this, invoking the spirits, including that of the dead man. When possessed, the shaman sprinkles some of the coconut milk on the relatives and places betel leaves on their chests; the shaman also feeds the relatives from the bowl of coconut milk. The object of this dance is said to be to enable the *prana karaya* to become a *Nae Yaka*. It is clear that this is simply a condensed account of the ceremony we witnessed at Bandaraduwa, described on pp. 233 to 237.

The conditions prevailing at Henebedda, which at first were most puzzling, were found to be largely due to the influence of Tissahami "the Vedda Arachi," whose strong personality has been already referred to on p. 41. This man had taught the present Henebedda shaman much of his lore, and the latter

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

'Má miya, má miya, má deyá,
Topang koyihetti mittigan yandáh!'

'My departed one, my departed one, my God!
Where art thou wandering?'

The spirit of the dead is here simply called upon, without even the object for which it is invoked being mentioned. And this invocation appears to be used on all occasions, when the intervention of the guardian spirit is required, in sickness, preparatory to hunting, etc.

"Sometimes, in the latter case, a portion of the flesh of the game is promised as a votive offering, in the event of the chase being successful; and they believe that the spirits will appear to them in dreams and tell them where to hunt.

"Sometimes they cook food and place it in the dry bed of a river, or some other secluded spot, and then call on their deceased ancestors by name. 'Come, and partake of this! Give us maintenance as you did when living! Come! wheresoever you may be; on a tree, on a rock, in the forest, come!' and they dance round the food, half chanting, half shouting, the invocation.

"They have no knowledge of a Supreme Being. 'Is he on a rock? On a white ant-hill? On a tree? I never saw a God!' was the only reply I received to repeated questions. They have no idols, offer no sacrifices, and pour no libations. They cannot be said to have any temples, for the few sticks sometimes erected, with a branch thrown over them, are, I imagine, simply to protect their votive offerings[1]."

Although in essentials this account is accurate, certain corrections and suggestions must be made. The "bilindoo yakkoon" are not "infant spirits" but obviously represent Bilindi Yaka who became a *yaka* while still a child. The arrow dance is clearly described and agrees with the dance we saw and photographed near Bendiyagalge, figures of which are given in Plate XXVI.

With regard to the spirits of the dead appearing in dreams and stating where game will be found, this, which is quite contradictory to our experience, has already been referred to on

[1] J. Bailey, *op. cit.* pp. 366–367.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

the offering is placed. The dance is held at night and continues until morning when the whole community eat the offering though only the men dance. We were shown a pot in a small cave near the settlement which was said to be kept there purposely, and which it was stated was used for boiling rice for the ceremony.

We may now consider the religious beliefs of certain communities in which the third stratum of belief already alluded to is dominant. Such communities are the village Veddas of Uva Bintenne and those of the Eastern Province and Tamankaduwa among all of whom the *Nae Yaku* were known and reverenced but the great Vedda heroes have all disappeared, their place having been taken by numerous Sinhalese gods and demons. Some of the village Veddas even build temples, rough bark or mud huts like their own habitations in which the various symbols of the *deviyo* and *yaku* are kept and in which the shaman dances.

Such a temple was seen at Yakure dedicated to Gangā Bandar Deyo, here also were two rough stones leaning against a tree on the *bund* of Yakurewaewa which were held sacred to Gane Deyo (Ganesa).

At a place called Nadena, where there were said to be Veddas until a few years ago, on the road running inland from Patrippu in the Eastern Province, there is a temple containing an image of Ganesa and this is looked upon as a Vedda shrine. Other temples or shrines in the Eastern Province are traditionally associated with Veddas though none survive at the present day, except, we believe, at Portiv near Patrippu and at Mandu.

Village Veddas of the Bintenne.

At Dambani and the neighbouring settlements of Bulugahaladena and Wellampelle the *Nae Yaku* are held to be of great importance. Reference has already been made on p. [illegible] to the difficulty of working with these village Veddas, and our information concerning the religious beliefs of the Dambani folk was obtained from the Arachi of Belligala; with regard to Bulugahaladena and Wellampelle the little information we possess was obtained at first hand and carefully checked, and

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

clear what opportunities existed for obtaining it. Deer and pig would be killed and eaten, and snakes were said to be killed without a scruple though one informant denied that he would kill a cobra.

Time did not allow of any systematic study of the religion of the Verdas, but it was clear that this had been much affected by Tamil influence while yet retaining some of the more obvious outward features of the Vedda cult of the dead. Unfortunately we had no opportunity of ascertaining definitely whether the Verdas have also retained the essence of the Vedda cult, i.e. the belief in the loving-kindness and the guiding influence of the spirits of their dead, though since the leader of the dance seen at Vakarai showed the classical signs of "possession," there seems to be every reason to hold this belief at least provisionally. The dance we saw rehearsed at Vakarai was said to be performed for sickness and in thanksgiving when a good harvest had been gathered. The dance took place at night, the men dancing in relays till daylight, the women squatting on the ground, but taking no part. No food is taken during the dance, but some is placed upon the "altar" *kudaram* (lit. cage or small shed, *T*) which is eaten by all in the morning.

The temple seen at Pellanchenai, of which a rough plan is given in fig. 14, was a building some 12 feet long by about 10 broad; it faced east and the roof was carried forward for a few feet beyond the front wall in which was a door. A stout pole (marked *P*), thought to be some 30 feet long and consisting of a young tree with the bark removed, stood in front of the temple about 30 feet from the entrance. To the north of the pole and about 8 feet from it was a hole in the ground *F*, really a small well containing water, while to the south of the pole and at a distance of about 12 feet from it there was a young tree before which a small platform *T* (*kudaram*) was built, on which a rough stone rested. Some distance beyond the pole and somewhat to the south of it stood a tree *H*, apparently quite dead, with a fringe of dried leaves and small twigs round its trunk, before which were the remains of a *kudaram*; to the south-west of the pole and roughly in the position of *Y* in the plan, a limb of a tree was planted in the soil. The branches

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
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if they have even any language. "Some," he says, "are so degraded that it has appeared doubtful whether they possess any language whatever; and not only is their dialect incomprehensible to a Singhalese, but even their communications with each other are made by signs, grimaces, and guttural sounds, which bear little or no resemblance to distinct words or systematized language."* I can only say that I have been repeatedly among the very wildest of the race—indeed the "wretched outcasts," here so summarily deprived of the power of speech, are those whom I have been endeavouring to describe, and I never knew one of them at a loss for words sufficiently intelligible to convey his meaning, not to his fellows only, but to the Singhalese of the neighbourhood, who are all, more or less, acquainted with the Veddah patois.

The Veddahs have no idea of a future state of rewards and punishments; for the vague vestige of a belief in retributive justice, which I have before mentioned, cannot be said to show any faith in the punishment by a Superior Power of sinners in this world.

It has been most truly said that it is a matter of almost insuperable difficulty to arrive at a proper understanding of the creed of barbarous tribes through the medium of direct questioning, and that nothing can be more vague than all their statements on this most important subject.†

It is not to be wondered at that a people so barbarous as the Veddahs are—without literature of any kind—who have lived in the depth of the forests in almost complete seclusion for centuries on centuries, should be incapable themselves of giving any definite or intelligent account of what they do believe. They are unable to express in language their ideas on subjects, which, even in their own minds, have never assumed any distinct form; and though they are ready enough to answer the questions put to them, it is no easy task so to frame them as to make their object intelligible to such rude and unlettered savages. The result of the most patient inquiry is, that the Veddahs have a vague belief in a host of undefined spirits, whose influence is rather for good than for evil. Still, vague as this belief is, not even the

* Tennent, vol. ii, pt. ix, c. iii, p. 441, 2nd ed. This is stated on the authority of "a gentleman who resided long in their vicinity, G. R. Mercer, Esq., of the Civil Service, who held office at Badulla." Those who remember that gentleman's love of a practical joke, will smile at seeing this "joke" gravely recorded in the *Physical, Historical, and Topographical Account of the Island of Ceylon*, by Sir J. Emerson Tennent, K.C.S., LL.D., etc.; and my able predecessor, Mr. Mercer, must have been as much amused at seeing it there, as any one else.

† See Hodgson's "Brief Note on Indian Ethnology," Bengal Asiatic Society's *Journal*, March 1849.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

no idols, offer no sacrifices, and pour no libations. They cannot be said to have any temples, for the few sticks sometimes erected, with a branch thrown over them, are, I imagine, simply to protect their votive offerings.

They have no system of medicine, though they will accept medicine when given. In cases of sickness they sprinkle water on the patient, invoking their deceased ancestors to heal him. Sometimes they simply utter the name of spirits as they dance round the sick man. Sometimes a garland of flowers is offered to the spirit who has afflicted him.* They believe in the efficacy of what are called devil dances, but are ignorant of the art of a Kattadia, or devil dancer. I can find no trace of metempsychosis, so universal amongst Buddhists.

I have now described what is the *actual* religious belief, if it can be so called, of the Veddahs; and it was only by dint of often repeated visits among them, and very careful inquiry, that I succeeded in obtaining the particulars I have recorded.

But, that at some period of their history they had some knowledge of a more "systematized" faith, their charms and invocations, some of their customs, and the very names they bear, seem conclusively to prove.

Such testimony is invaluable. For neither the inquiror, whose zeal may induce him to jump too hastily at conclusions, nor the people themselves, can distort it, or give it a strained interpretation. But this evidence all points to something long past, to a faith once, at least, familiar to them, but now forgotten. At the least, it indicates a former contact with civilization, and proves that they have a history more full of incident than would belong to a race which was always as barbarous as it is now.†

In their charms the sun and moon are frequently invoked, although in their daily life neither luminary is respected.‡

* They invoke the Gal-Yakko, spirit of the rock; Wedde-Yakko, spirit of the chase; Oonapāna-Yakko, of whom I have no knowledge; and the shade of their great-grandmother. They also propitiate "Maha-Yakkhini", who appears rather an evil personage. It is to her that they offer a garland of flowers. They describe her as a "foreigner", and say that they know nothing about her, but acquired their awe of her from the Singhalese. The Weddi-Yakko is known to the Singhalese; hunters offer flowers, blood, and burnt meat to this spirit, before hunting, to secure their success. Oonapāna-Yakko is known to the Singhalese of the Weddirates, but I do not think he is generally known to the Singhalese.

† Vide Tennent's account of the Veddahs, especially vol. ii, part iii, chap. ix, p. 441-2. "They have no knowledge of a God, nor of a future state, no temples, no altars, prayers, or charms; in short, no 'instinct of worship' except, it is reported, some ceremonies analogous to devil worship."

‡ This occurs in several charms. The following (which, though not known to the Singhalese, as applied to *wild boars*, is identical with one known to them to drive away toothache), not only invokes the sun and moon,

8: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

181 sophisticated Vedda knows what is expected of him he will act up to
152 the expectation right enough. Personally I have never yet met a Vedda who could not laugh. The truth is that the Vedda will laugh with the best of us when there is occasion; but he is a stranger to the conventional, hypocritical smile of civilisation, meant only to please and so uncertain an index of the heart. The Vedda's face, like a child's, is a mirror to his mind.

His natural expression is one of apathy and moroseness. Schooled to hardship and privation, he is neither greatly distraught by sorrow nor transported by joy. He expresses his emotions with more moderation than we; he is the greater fatalist; and accepts with stoic equanimity the hard conditions of his life which have wrought into his expression a dour indifference, a decorous gravity.

There is something naturally fierce in his nature; and it does not do to anger him. The tradition is undoubtedly true that the Veddas, at one time, carried in their betel bags fragments of human liver which they chewed when roused, to give fire to their frenzy. And this is probably the origin of the Sinhalese threat, "I'll eat your liver!" There is a spot in the Eastern Province which commemorates to this
[173] day an early incident of colonisation: A Vedda had once way-laid and killed a European soldier, and going up to him could hear the ticking of his watch; examining this he said, "His life is still here," and dashed it to pieces on a rock.

When a Vedda returns from an expedition no one must speak to him until he has rested and it has pleased him to talk first. One who had accompanied us once on a hunt nearly killed a Sinhalese boy who innocently asked him what he had brought, the moment he arrived. Most sportsmen, Vedda or not, are impatient of cross-examination when fatigued—especially if unsuccessful.

●177 The Veddas have no conception of a supreme being; nor have they any myth or theory bearing on cosmogony. The panorama of the heavens is beyond their questioning; but its supremacy is instinctively
195 avowed: "*Mā Suriya Deyyo*" (by the Sun God) is an oath by which the Vedda vouches his good faith.

176 Like animals, concerned only with their immediate needs, they take the world very much as they find it. But if the aloof heavens leave their imaginations untouched, not so their immediate environment. Here exist real powers more within the pale of their comprehension, influencing every act of their lives, overshadowing their credulous minds, and affording at least some data on which to found a faith. Is it surprising then that they people Nature with sentient beings, unseen, but very evident by their acts. And what spirits more comprehensible to the primitive mind, more inspiratory of faith and fear, than those of one's

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Another strange thing about the Veddas, and one which may possibly be connected with their lack of humour, is the fact that every one of them is a George Washington, unable to tell a lie or to conceive of anyone else telling a lie.

They cannot even believe that any one would take the property of anyone else, and association with civilisation has failed to convince them that it is possible.

With all this—or, rather without all this—the Veddas are a peaceable, gentle, quiet people. They take wives without any marriage ceremony, and are faithful and constant to them, supporting them to death.

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own departed; spirits, real and intimate, inhabiting like themselves rock and tree and stream; human enough to pester or assist, to take vengeance if angered, and, if propitiated, tutelary over the Vedda's abodes. It is owing to the maliciousness of these spirits, and less from any fear of wild animals, that the Vedda is averse to travelling alone in the jungle; though, when necessity compels, he will do so, armed only with his little axe. Nor do they permit their women to adorn themselves too much for fear of attracting the *hetha* (devil).*

When a person dies it is the *hetha* that killed him; and the *hetha* of the dead one remains by the corpse and haunts the vicinity for years. Hence the great fear these people have of their dead; a fear that sometimes makes them cover with leaves and abandon a dying person, be he or she their best beloved, lest their necks be squeezed; a fear that keeps them away for years from caves where deaths have occurred.

In the course of time the spirit of a dead person loses its individuality in a general spirit world, the spirits of the more recently dead, and therefore the better known to succeeding generations, supplanting the older. A belief embodying the beautiful thought, that we really do not die until those who knew us and loved us are also dead.

The Vedda religion then is a cult of the spirits of the dead; not so much an ancestor worship, though a few names of long dead Veddas, such as Bilinde Yakka and Kande Yakka have a place in it, as a homage to spirits recently deceased (*Nae-Yakka*).†

The named demons of the pure Veddas are few, and their propitiatory ceremonies but two or three. Nevertheless, a half-Vedda devil-dancer of Galmede gave me the names of a hundred devils, and unctuously expounded a demonology as involved as it was terrible; taking special delight in describing a dance in which men with hideous masks and jangling bells attached to deer-skin greaves, their bodies stained in imitation of blood, swayed great Vedda *audes* mounted on carved handles, and made the forest echo to thundering drum-beats and demoniac yells.

Of male demons there were:—(1) Tree demons of the *Na* and *Bo* tree; seven to each tree in order of precedence: (2) Rock demons (*Gal-vanniyas*) named after various hills: (3) Flower demons (*Ravathath*): (4) *Bandara* demons; (5) *Vanniyas*—the spirits of four Veddas who were crushed to death in a cave by the fall of the rock overhead; with a shout of "ha" they were transformed into devils. Then there were innumerable female demons, a wife to each male demon (*Kalusalees*, *Peli-hanayas* and *Hanna-hanayas*).

From all this it will not be wondered at that the Veddas are highly superstitious, and ascribe to many an ordinary incident of life supernatural significance. It is, for instance, an ill omen to meet a Buddhist priest or Moorman when setting out on a journey, or to knock the big toe against a stone or stump. Should a gekko cry when a plan is under discussion, or a blood-sucker‡ or Brahamin lizard fall on one, the portent is bad.

*The Veddas seem to make no distinction between the words devil and spirit, the term *yakka* being used for either; thus *Gal-Yakka* means rock-demon, *Nae-Yakka* ancestral spirit. *Hetha* also means spirit or devil and is, if anything, the more malevolent being. *Vanniya* is another word synonymous with *yakka* and *hetha*.

†The Veddas, by Seligmann; page 30.

‡A species of lizard.